

On Art

“Everybody discusses and pretends
to understand... when it is simply
necessary to love.”

– Claude Monet

The Magpie outsells all the other postcards
at the Musée d'Orsay: sunlit snow,
a hope-yellow sky, lone bird on a fence.

Did Monet see a magpie or create one,
the landscape needing a heartbeat
or the other way around?

I want a postcard of the man I watched
this morning, my heart pounding
as he stood treestill on the trail,

arms outstretched, feeding birds
from his palms. Blink-quick, a chickadee
lit, then soared, seed in its beak,

body disappearing into pines.
How to remember the pinch of tiny claws,
the flutter of something wild?

I've read that art is about afterthought—
the magpie and the moments that follow,
empty fence, shifting shadows—

and wonder if love, too, is art,
because we crave its thrill,
emotion swooping down on wings,

feathers gleaming in the sun,
until the slightest movement,
the briefest doubt, changes their hue.

Christine Rhein, “On Art” from her collection,
Wild Flight (Texas Tech University Press, 2008).